

The metaphysics of democracy

Why the China sponsored tribute to Karl Marx done by EU Commission president Juncker contradicts primary EU values.

Miriam Lexmann

Last week the European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker has payed tribute to Karl Marx at his hometown of Trier. It launched a series of exhibitions that included an unavailing of a gigantic statue of Marx sponsored by China. I have captured this information through various EU media without pointing out to the serious questions this piece of news carries.

Last year we observed the hundredth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. On 7 November 2017 the European House of History together with the home party of the Commission president – the EPP - organised an event to shade light on the historical event which sparked one of the greatest atrocities in the entire history on mankind and pay tribute to its victims. The EPP embraces probably most of the parties of former dissidents and opposition leaders from the post-communist European states. In this regard, the party has an important role to play in safeguarding the memories of the horrors of communism.

In my speech, at the event, I pointed out how dangerous for current contested democracies are those voices, who defend Marxist ideology with the excuse that the atrocities were not an inevitable consequence of the theory of historical materialism and keep defending it as an idealistic one. The link between the atrocities and the marxist theory is very clear! Marxism opposes the very core values – the so-to-say metaphysical principles of democracy which is that dignity of every human person must be protected as a primary value and that all people are equal in their liberties and rights. No human person has the right to curb the liberty or dignity of another! Marxism has imprisoned societies via the class system. It is an ideology of resentment. Those who owned property or were educated or wealthy were targets of that resentment. Those who believed in God could be sent behind bars or killed, because “Die Religion ... ist das Opium des Volkes” and God had no longer a place in the new materialist ‘International’ world order – the order that itself was trying to replace God.

History shows us, that ideologies have consequences and any ideology that puts one group of people against another degenerates into a system that turns against the human person. The fact that President Juncker argues: “[Marx] Today he stands for things, which he is not responsible for and which he didn't cause...” is against the basic logic of causes and consequences, but also opposes the philosophical principles of epistemology. In the Theaetetus, Socrates defines knowledge as true belief "with an account". For this reason, we can trust that what president Juncker said was his believe, but the account says that knowledge (and experience) of Marxism tells us the exact opposite. Empirical examples do not show one single case when Marxist theory was applied with a positive result. Many, many people laid their lives in a struggle that the in-human ideology doesn't take over their counties and societies. These people saw through the ideology and its inevitable alarming consequences. For this reason, Juncker's comments were a disgraceful assault to all these martyrs for liberty, and all victims of communism, including my family members some of whom were killed when trying to prevent that the regime of followers of Marx's dogmas takes over my country. Others served many years in prison or uranium work camps, because they were trying to liberate my country from the regime.

Maybe the most elaborated account of why Marxism will inevitable enslave human person was provided by the Catholic Church, the church Juncker claims to be a part of. In its encyclicas, the

Church recognises “the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class” and offers an alternative to the enslaving solution laid forward by Marx, first in Leo XIII’s encyclica *Rerum Novarum* (1891), which is considered a foundational text of modern Catholic social teaching. Many of the positions on Marx’s dogmas were supplemented by later encyclicals, in particular Pius XI’s *Quadragesimo anno* (1931), John XXIII’s *Mater et magistra* (1961), and John Paul II’s *Centesimus annus* (1991).

EU treaties define democracy as the fundamental principle of the Union, to be enshrined in all policies, external and internal. And yet, liberal democracy is currently a highly contested system of governance, not only abroad but also in the heart of the Union. It is being exposed to a ‘competition’ with various populist policies and eroded by growing disinformation and propaganda campaigns seeking to discredit the EU and eventually undermine its positions. Kremlin being one of the greatest resources of such campaigns. An opinion poll in the V4 and Germany conducted by the International Republican Institute in 2017 unveiled that 40% of Czechs, 36% Slovaks, 21% Hungarians and 17% Poles believe that the EU is pushing them to abandon their traditional values. On top of that 41% of Slovaks, 27% of Czechs, 20% of Germans, 18% Hungarians and 14% of Poles believe that Russia has taken the side of traditional European values. Putin’s regime is actively trying to revive the power of Russia by blurring the difference between the communist regime and liberal democracy and highlighting the fame of then-Soviet Union. Organisations like Memorial, which are trying to pay tribute to the hundreds of millions victims of the Soviet regime and thus sustain the original pro-democratic course of current Russia, are persecuted while statues to Stalin are erected across the country. These attempts to normalise the memory of communism are exported into the EU by a tacit support of actors like the Slovak governmental party SMER, the Belgian Prince Laurent, who regularly attends events celebrating the Chinese, Cuban or other regimes, and now president Juncker with his tribute to Marx but also many others.

At a time when our democracies are experiencing so many challenges, Europeans are being beleaguered from one side by statues of Marx, which are sponsored by one of the most brutal current regimes, which kills and humiliates people in an industrial scale – China (please see report: ‘The Darkest Moment: the crackdown on human rights in China’). And from the other side by statues of Stalin sponsored by a looming regime – Russia, which is waging a hybrid war, threatening the entire integrity of the Union. I am not sure, how we believe that people will opt for liberal democracy, that is lagging in delivering, amidst these erected memorials of homage to various ‘idealist’ but in-human ideologies...

***Miriam Lexmann** is a former Permanent Representative of the Slovak Parliament to the EU, who left diplomacy when the current post-communist government in Slovakia took over. She works in international democracy support and serves as Member of the Advisory Board of COMPASS project on capacity-building and governance of the University of Kent.*